

Solon Sees Need for New State Veterans Hospital

By CHARLES E. CHAPEL
Assemblyman, 46th District

On Friday, Nov. 12, I attended a meeting of the Assembly Committee on Military and Veterans Affairs. The purpose of the meeting was to hear testimony regarding possible legislation at the 1966 Budget Session of the Legislature, which will begin Feb. 1 in Sacramento.

The principal witnesses who testified were John Hanaker, Administrative Deputy Director, Department of Veterans Affairs, State of California; Stanley Dunmire, Legislative Representative, American Legion, Department of California; Buddy Michael Locker, Senior Vice Commander, Veterans of World War I of U.S.A., Department of California; Edwin L. Myers, Department Commander, Veterans of the Foreign Wars of the United States; Norman Kelly, Military and Veterans Affairs Officer for Los Angeles County; and B. Bill Murad, Commander, AMVETS, Department of California.

The remarkable thing is that all these gentlemen agreed on what new laws should be enacted and what existing laws should be amended. They also agreed that they want the emphasis placed on the urgent needs of the men and women of our armed forces who have become disabled because of actual service against the enemies of the United States, both domestic and foreign. I use the word "domestic" deliberately to include the soldiers of our own California National Guard who were wounded during the recent armed insurrection in Los Angeles County, including the Watts area; and those who may be wounded in the future suppressing other armed insurrections.

The patriotic legislative program of our California veterans is too long to discuss in detail in this family journal. However, one item on the agenda deserves special attention.

More than two and one-half million men and women are veterans who live and pay taxes in the State of California. The vast majority of them live in Southern California, that is, south of the Tehachapi Mountains. Of this number, far more than 50 per cent live in Los Angeles County.

The Southern California veterans are very reluctant to leave their families and friends and go to the California State Veterans Home at Yountville, in Napa County. This is the only California State facility for the care of our wounded, sick, aged, and indigent veterans.

The question may arise as to why such veterans do not enter the U.S. Veterans Hospital at Sawtelle, in Los Angeles County. The answer is that they do when there are empty beds for them but there is always a waiting list.

On June 30, 1965, I discovered that of all the veterans at the California State Veterans Home at Yountville, only 7 per cent were from Southern California and the remaining 93 per cent were from north of the Tehachapi Mountains.

Because of the above facts, all of the veteran organizations mentioned above, plus those not represented at the meeting of our Committee, recommend and urge that immediate action be taken to construct a second State Veterans Home and Hospital in Southern California. Personally, I agree that this is a clear and present need.

At the meeting on Nov. 12, I asked Mr. Stanley Dunmire if the American Legion and the other veterans' organizations have any recommendations as to where the proposed new Veterans Home and Hospital should be located. He replied that he realized that this is a matter of primary consideration but no particular location has been designated by the American Legion,

the VFW, or any other veterans' organization in California.

During the discussion that followed, I explained that whether the State is going to build a freeway, a South Bay State College, or a new State Veterans' Hospital, it is first necessary to find suitable land, at a reasonable cost, which can be used as a public benefit without injury to those living or working near the site selected.

Mr. Stanley Dunmire replied that he would report back to the American Legion and ask for recommendations. The other veterans leaders present concurred, and so did the Assembly Committee on Military and Veterans Affairs. Incidentally, it is possible to buy the land and build the hospital without increasing any present tax or levying a new tax. Also, it is not necessary to float a bond issue or have a tax override. All that is needed is for the State of California to spend less on rat-hole projects. Please write to me at Post Office Box 327, Redondo Beach, if you have any ideas on this subject.

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